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NEW ENGLAND NEWSCLIP

CMP to get firm to test PCB levels

AUGUSTA — ^{EPA} Central Maine Power Co. officials have said the company has contracted with another firm to test the levels of hazardous waste at an Augusta scrap yard used by CMP until 1978 to dispose of electrical transformers containing small amounts of toxic PCBs.

The information received from the testing will be used to develop a disposal program for the transformers junked at the F. O'Connor scrap yard between 1952 and 1978, some of which contain oil contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls, known as PCBs, CMP officials said.

They said Acheron Engineering Corp. will analyze samples drawn from the tanks at the O'Connor site.

Attention was focused on the former outer Eastern Avenue junkyard when it was named to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's so-called Superfund list along with 405 other sites nationwide, largely as the result of the

discovery of leaking PCBs.

The levels of PCBs found on the O'Connor site, however, were so low that EPA officials said in 1983 they wouldn't regulate the handling of the materials even if the site were still in operation.

A CMP official said the company hopes to sign a consent decree with EPA and the F. O'Connor Co. of Augusta that would establish the future course of the study of the former scrap yard, with an eye towards designing a clean-up procedure.

"Rather than take time in extended negotiations with the EPA, CMP has come forward and agreed

to assume responsibility for getting the studies underway so that the issues surrounding this scrap yard may be promptly resolved," a CMP spokesman said.

He said the studies, known as a remedial investigation and feasibility study, will take about two years to complete, and will include 27 separate parts split into three phases.

The studies will determine the extent of the contaminants and help determine what cleanup method or methods may be used.

Although very small amounts of PCBs have been found in soil and water surrounding the site, environ-

mental officials say there has been little threat to area residents because all the homes in the area use city water unaffected by the chemicals.

Earlier studies showed the highest levels of PCBs found on the O'Connor site were two parts per million and tests of nearby Riggs Brook which empties into the Kennebec River showed levels of three parts per billion.

While the EPA has an advisory standard of one part per billion of PCBs in drinking water, they do not regulate the handling of PCB-contaminated transformers still in use unless concentrations of 50 parts per million or more are discovered.

O'Connor
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